

## Daniel's reflection for week beginning 5th December – Synod – a way of being Church

*(Pope Francis has called the Church to work towards synodality, a more inclusive and consultative way of being Church. Daniel was appointed Parish Priest of St Benedict's Garforth in 1991. After a long parish process of listening, consultation and discernment, via many meetings at house-group and parish level, underpinned by prayer and Gospel reflections, Daniel wrote the following message in the parish bulletin. Synodality in action 30 years ago!)*

'Yesterday I asked God for the grace of living in the present. For some reason my mind was full of thoughts about the past and worries about the future. But the only place to find peace in the Spirit is NOW. For some reason I have been anxious about how I was succeeding as your parish priest. Was I sufficiently available to you? Was I trying too much too soon? Was I making an impression on St. Benedict's?

And then it struck me. It was myself I was thinking about. I was worried about my image. I had taken back from God, the responsibility for the success of the parish. I was getting snowed under by all the seemingly impossible tasks I had started. I was allowing my own smallness to hinder the growth of God's loving community here at St. Benedict's.

Seeing all this was a moment of grace for me. I was now able to stop being distressed and reclaim the wisdom and power of God. So let me explain the position as I see it at the moment. We have accumulated, through the November meeting and the December questionnaire, a wealth of information and support for the journey of our parish community into the next few years.

As I studied the almost 200 pages you have returned I am overwhelmed by the richness of your talents and the depth of your goodwill. To fully explore this generous potential will take many months, so please be patient. It was at this point that I heard the whisper of the Holy Spirit. In my moment of grace I became aware of "God's timing." So I renewed my trust in God and in you and remembered that I'm only the servant around here! I feel truly privileged to help you run some Benedict's.

During the next few weeks, I will be contacting some of you about taking responsibility in a number of the issues raised at the November meeting. There will be a list of volunteers to support you. We will begin with the more urgent concerns, leaving the others until later this year. Some of you are already giving of yourselves profoundly, but it is not God's intention that anyone should feel unnecessary pressure. We frequently expect too much of ourselves and of each other.

I wish to thank you again for so many things, especially for your support, affirmation and encouragement. It is very easy to feel lonely in this job. In fact I'm more and more convinced that there's a lonely corner in every heart whether or not we know it.

Finally, Cardinal Hume has just reminded us that, no matter what administrative or theological talents a successful priest might have, without respect for his parishioners he is lost. He wrote,

“ . . . if you are very sensitive to other people as being unique images and likenesses of God, if you have that kind of reverence for them, there follows a gentleness and a curtesy in dealing with them- two essential qualities for a priest.” And for everyone!

Please continue to pray for each other, for our wider community, as we journey forward together.